



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

**CHARLES D. BAKER**  
Governor

**KARYN E. POLITO**  
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Secretary

**MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH**  
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000  
[www.mass.gov/dph](http://www.mass.gov/dph)

To: All DEA-Registered Practitioners

From: Deirdre Calvert, LICSW, Director of the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services

Date: April 10, 2020

Re: Alert Regarding Use of Telemedicine during Public Health Emergency-COVID-19

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) is providing this interim guidance to assist practitioners with providing the medication that patients need during the public health emergency while also limiting unnecessary exposure of COVID-19 to their staff and patients.

As you may be aware, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) previously issued guidance which provides greater flexibility for the use of telemedicine to issue prescriptions for controlled substances in schedule II- V.

The DEA has subsequently released guidance regarding the [Use of Telephones to Initiate Buprenorphine Prescribing](#).

In accordance with the DEA guidance, for as long the declaration of the public health emergency remains in effect, DEA-registered practitioners may issue prescriptions for buprenorphine and other controlled substances to patients for whom they have not conducted an in-person medical evaluation, provided all of the following conditions are met:

- The prescription is issued for a legitimate medical purpose by a practitioner acting in the usual course of his/her professional practice
- The telemedicine communication is conducted using an audio-visual, real-time, two-way interactive communication system, or via telephone (without video) call, subject to the additional requirements stated in the section Telephone Requirements.
- The practitioner is acting in accordance with applicable Federal and State law.

**Telephone Requirements**

In addition to the requirements for telemedicine laid out above, if providers choose to use telephones they should:

- Comply with all applicable standards of care; and

- Make a determination that an adequate evaluation of the patient can be accomplished via the use of telephone.

If you have any questions, please contact Therese Fleisher at [therese.fleisher@state.ma.us](mailto:therese.fleisher@state.ma.us).